

THE EXTENDED FAMILY

585 a cold and draughty part of the hut not favoured by more
 533 senior members of the family. The groom arrives at the huts
 596 some time after midnight when the family is asleep, slips into
 the hut, remains with his young wife for an hour or so and
 then, well before dawn, is already on his way back to the sheep
 which may be two or three hours' walking distance away.

• [522] Naturally the family are aware that these visits occur. Stories
 are told about grooms who tripped over milk cans as they en-
 tered the pitch dark hut or failed to convince the dogs of their
 true identity. They are considered to be hysterically funny;
 perhaps an indication of the ambivalent feelings which this
 conflict of loyalties provokes.

585 If the newly married shepherd is the eldest son the developing
 596 pattern of relations has certain rather specific nuances. The
 family take an excessive pride in the first bride. They also take
 some trouble to make her feel at home, although at the same
 time their sensitivity to the attitude of the groom towards her
 is greater than in the case of the marriages of younger brothers.
 This after all is the first intrusion of an outsider into the hitherto
 exclusive family circle. More importantly the relationship be-
 tween a father and his eldest son frequently shows signs of strain
 during this period. A father cannot in accordance with custo-
 mary right long delay his retirement beyond the time when his
 eldest son has his first child, for it is an important value of this
 community that a man who is married and a parent should be
 the 'master' (vounchips) in his own household. But after the
 son's marriage and before the birth of the first child the father
 insists that he should continue to control the affairs of the ex-
 tended family while the son is learning under his guidance the
 elements of his future role. Until the pregnancy of his wife is
 well established, the irritating uncertainty about the transfer of
 power, which will confer on him the status and prestige of a
 family leader in the community, sometimes tempts the son to
 show a lack of respect* to his father which previously he would
 not have dared to express so freely.

596 The retirement of the father resolves tensions between proxi-
 577 mate generations in the extended family which are considerably
 aggravated by the influence of the prestige values of the wider

* Such lack of respect, however, is seldom shown in public.

585 to make the bridal procession the spectacular occasion it must
612 appear if their prestige is to be maintained in the community.

[472] They give this support by their numbers, their own bearing, and the quality of their horses and the coloured woollen saddle-cloths which are draped over the backs of the animals. For whenever the procession passes through or close to a village both Sarakatsani and villagers line the path, to enjoy the spectacle with critical eyes, and to exchange greetings with the riders. The watchers laugh excitedly and try to draw the riders into an exchange of bawdy quips and jokes, but the horsemen must remain unmoved with upright backs and proud serious faces.

Earlier on the same Sunday morning before the bridal procession sets out on its journey, the bridegroom is prepared for [302] his ordeal. Seated on a chair outside the door of his hut he is attended by a kinsman with the necessary skill, who cuts his hair, shaves his beard, and trims the moustache. This, like the sewing of the standard, is a part of customary wedding ritual. [533] The kinsmen gather about the groom and accompanied by the gipsy band sing about the shaving of the bridegroom. From time to time the singing is interrupted by heated debate between the watching kinsmen and the barber as to the style of the hair cutting, the angle of the moustache, and the effectiveness of the shaving. For they fear the appraisal of strangers on the road and the malicious hopes of the bride's kinsmen that the bridegroom will in some way look ridiculous.

585 After the barber has completed his task, two or three of
605 the more senior first cousins with a reputation for worldly
292 knowledge go into the hut to supervise the changing of the
[198] bridegroom's clothes (ν'ἀλλάξουν τὸ γαμπρὸ). The Sarakatsani have abandoned the traditional kilt and today the prosaic costume of a bridegroom consists of a white shirt buttoned to the neck without a tie, and a blue suit of manufactured cloth.

[784] The cousins help their young kinsman to put on these clothes to
[833] which he is not accustomed and they make certain that he does not change his underclothes; for with these an envious man or woman might affect the sexual potency of the groom by sorcery. As a prophylactic against the same peril they place some steel
585 object in the folds of the shirt tails before he puts it on. As he is
605 dressed, almost like a child, they feed him with various pieces

776 spread sudden panics, and when they are not actively engaged in evildoing, they skulk out of sight but within earshot and play their flutes.

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787 G Good and evil omens, as of old, are discerned in the flight of birds. The nomads abhor eagles and vultures and all birds of prey that hover on high: they belong to the devil, and are thus in league with the evil spirits. When these harbingers of peril hang in midair above a caravan, they are spying on the destination. The nomads' abomination of these birds may also spring from the occasional raids of eagles, when newborn kids are carried away bleating piteously into the sky. The nomads prophesy from entrails, and like most ancient and modern Greeks, they read the future in the markings on sheep's shoulder blades. Their sacrifices, *kourbania*, are frequent. A *Pitta*, a kind of cake which is baked in a wide metal pan, is the rather gloomy fare at most of their feasts, as they consider it wrong to kill and eat an animal without some ritual excuse. So, as the only meat they get is that when a beast is slaughtered for a sacrificial occasion, they pine for these pretexts, even when the cause is a distressing one. A wedding or the christening of a *tsilingas'* son, the illness of one of their community, an epidemic among the flocks, the birth of a seven-month child, the arrival of an honored guest, or the end of shearing — all these are occasions for meat. The sacrificial beast is always roasted whole on a spit, and its throat is cut as it lies on a flat branch with its eyes looking into the sun. The act is surrounded by much mystery, and the nomads peer at the insides for mantic significance; and at Easter, a bloody cross from the paschal lamb is dabbed on the shoulders of children.

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522 The approach to Lent, and especially the Saturday night and the early hours of the Sunday before Lent, used to be the signal for much behavior which was not found elsewhere. The wearing of masks, the painting of faces, the donning of whiskers and beards of goat's hair, and the young men dressing up as women — all this, with copious drinking, horseplay, and cheerful frisking about among the wigwams, is pretty current practice still, a token of rustic carnival zest. But formerly it took a much more stylized form. A heavily painted young man clad in a scarlet dress and long goatskin locks was chosen as a bride, and a whiskered and skin-clad comrade represented the groom; others were rigged out as the priest, the *kaumbaras*, and the wedding guests. A mock Christian marriage was then irreverently solemnized, followed by dances which were far more uninhibited than are those at a real marriage. The bridal

536 pair then retired to a hut, and to the hilarity of all,
 522 comic simulacra of considerable indecency were
 831 enacted within. But the groom was found wanting
 and thrown out; candidate after candidate entered
 with apparent promise, and each one in turn was
 [523] ejected in disgrace. A fitting champion was dis-
 covered at last, and during a final mime of tri-
 umphant bawdiness, the entire company danced
 around the hut singing "The Pepper Song," the
 dancers alternately banging their noses and their
 rumps on the ground with a seesaw motion I
 would give much to observe.

851 THE feast of St. George is the most propitious
 553 for christenings, and babies born immediately
 [794] afterward often have to wait for a year to be bap-
 [775] tized. But they are always named at once, and
 should they fall ill, they are given a lay baptism
 on the spot, lest they should die and turn into little
 163 vampires. The average family varies between
 848 five and fifteen children. Random fornication,
 [689] adultery, divorce, rape, and bastardy are un-
 known, and should a case of bastardy ever crop
 up, death to all concerned is the only remedy.
 This is not only for reasons of morality, for these
 ill-starred children are thought to be Satan per-
 [725] sonified; they bring a curse on the huts, and should
 one grow up and die a natural death, a ghost rises

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Land

We

35 saw the framework of poles, supporting the walls and roof of reeds, black-
 [342] ened from the smoke since there was neither chimney nor smoke hole in the roof.

The partition separating the entrance room from the main room was
 [422] smoothed with clay stucco over the reeds. The total movable earthly pos-
 sessions of these people were either in these two small rooms or in the form
 [583] of the sheep pasturing outside. We noted the mattresses on the pounded
 earth floor, a pile of dowry blankets in one corner, another hearth, a small
 kerosene lamp hanging on a post over the single bed, two windows about a

[273] foot square covered with chicken wire, a hanging shelf from which Konstan-
 tin's gentle twenty-year-old sister got a sweet liqueur (*mastica*), *loukoumi*
 (Turkish delight), and ouzo to serve to us. The flour was kept in a sack in
 592 a corner. The family living in this hut consisted of the widowed mother,
 two unmarried daughters, and two unmarried sons: There were three more
 married daughters, who were of course no longer in their parental home.

842 "The poorer the family, the more children you find; the richer the family,
 the fewer the children," said the mother. In an aside to me, Konstantin
 added, "For producing children is the only recreation of the poor." "But
 I understood," I said, "that shepherd families like to have lots of children to
 help with their flocks." Western influence was already making itself felt,
 152 for the mother said, "No, every child is just another mouth to feed." The

[481] look of fatigue on the faces of these people — the look of age on the pale
 [648] twenty-year-old — showed that they had gone through more than their
 share of unrest and tribulation. Even their bodily movements, slower and
 listless compared to, say, the Valtetsi shepherds', reflected the strain of
 being in a border or frontier area where part of the enemy strategy seems
 to be to make the inhabitants feel so insecure that they will abandon their
 fields, just as the previous owners had done.

342 But these worn and weary frontier Sarakatsani have a saving sense of
 humor. When I was asking about the differences in the shapes of the huts
 522 used as dwellings and those used for animals, one of the unmarried daugh-
 ters who was serving us refreshments said with a smile of pure fun lighting
 up her pallid face, "Oh, we only use different kinds of tile to distinguish
 where we live and where the animals live." Everybody laughed at this ri-
 diculous reference to nonexistent tile roofs.

462 Here again I tried to learn how the Sarakatsani viewed themselves in
 [582] relationship to the other nomadic groups. They assured us that they never
 married with the Karagouni or the Albanian-speaking Greek Vlachs. "Why
 [186] not?" we asked. "Isn't the work of their women the same as yours?" "Most
 definitely not," affirmed the mother. "The Karagouni women don't know
 anything except pasturing the sheep and twisting their spindle. But we Sara-
 katsani women can work on the loom, work in the fields, and also if neces-
 sary care for the flocks."